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Mrs J Willis
Headteacher
Woodside Primary Academy
Wood Street
London
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Dear Mrs Willis

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Woodside Primary Academy

Following my visit with Robert Lovett, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 8 and 9 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed 19 lessons across both school sites and made several short visits to classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or one of the deputy headteachers. The inspection team looked at pupils' work in books and talked informally to pupils about their learning in lessons. They scrutinised the school's records and documentation and met with senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair, the Executive Director of the REAch2 Academy Trust and a group of pupils.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is not making enough progress in raising standards for all pupils.

Context

This is a very large primary academy serving over 800 pupils from very diverse cultures and backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils attending the academy are learning English as an additional language. The academy's pupil population is not as stable as usually seen nationally. This is because a high number of pupils join and leave the academy at different times during the year. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also well above average. The proportion of these pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The governing body has recently been reconstituted. There has not been a significant change to teaching staff since the school's conversion to become an academy.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Leaders are confident that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are gradually rising, but the academy's records of pupils' progress show that the pace of improvement is inconsistent between year groups. Too few pupils are making good progress, especially in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. This means that pupils in Year 3 who left Key Stage 1 with below average attainment are not making up the ground they lost in previous years. The systems to track the development of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not provide a clear picture of how much progress they make during their time in Nursery and Reception.

Work in pupils' books across the academy confirms that progress in writing and mathematics is variable for all groups of pupils. The best progress is made in Years 5 and 6 where teachers have high expectations of their pupils and set work that offers the right level of challenge for all. The academy's own checks on teachers' planning and pupils' work show that teachers often set the same basic task for all pupils in the class and provide additional support for lower-attaining pupils and those with disabilities or special educational needs to help them succeed. Work in books shows that some pupils struggle to complete this work and therefore do not make enough progress over time.

The quality of teaching

Some good teaching was seen during this monitoring visit, but in most lessons inspectors saw teaching that required improvement. This does not match with the

academy's own assessment of the quality of teaching which judges teaching across the academy to be mainly good or outstanding.

In the best lessons, teachers explain concepts clearly and use skilful questioning to develop pupils' understanding. They encourage pupils to discuss and justify their answers and this helps them to clarify their thinking. In these lessons, pupils are able to work with sustained focus and concentration and achieve well.

Lesson planning shows that teachers are aware of the wide range of abilities in each class, but they do not always use this knowledge to set tasks that provide the right level of challenge for their pupils. As a result, groups of pupils often find their work either too difficult or too easy and do not make good progress in lessons. Additional adults are frequently deployed to work with groups of pupils who need extra support, however, these adults do not always have the skills or in-depth subject knowledge to analyse errors or explain concepts to pupils.

The academy has introduced regular handwriting sessions to improve presentation, but teachers do not insist that pupils always use a neat, joined-up handwriting style for their day-to-day work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most write useful 'next step' comments to help pupils improve. However, pupils do not always respond to this feedback in an appropriate way or complete corrections and this is not followed up or checked by teachers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour seen in lessons and around the academy on this monitoring inspection was generally good. However, at times, pupils lost concentration in lessons, stopped work and began to chatter. This happened when the task was either too difficult for them or when pupils had finished the activity too quickly because it was too easy.

Pupils are keen to participate in discussions. They cooperate well with each other and share resources effectively. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning, but many lack effective strategies to work independently and overcome minor difficulties without asking an adult for help.

Academy leaders have been successful in improving pupils' attendance and punctuality. Initiatives to reward good attendance have proved popular with pupils and parents and carers. The new learning mentor has worked closely with parents and carers who find it difficult to get their children to school regularly and on time and this has helped to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent or late for school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Senior leaders have recognised that some roles and responsibilities in the academy's current leadership structure are not clearly defined. For example, the role of the phase leader is underdeveloped at present and overlaps with that of the year group leader. A new leadership structure has been drawn up and approved by the governing body. The new structure will be introduced in September 2013 to coincide with the reorganisation of year groups across the two school sites.

The headteacher has tackled the serious underperformance of some teachers and this has led to changes in staffing. However, several teachers in the school still need help to develop their skills. The present system of paired work (coaching) with a strong partner teacher does not provide the intensive programme of support that is required.

The academy's records of checks on the quality of teaching show that systems for quality assuring teaching are not rigorous enough. Senior leaders visit lessons regularly and joint observations undertaken during this inspection show that the headteacher and deputy headteachers are able to correctly identify the strengths and weaknesses in individual lessons. However, senior leaders do not take sufficient account of work in pupils' books when judging the impact of teaching over time. This leads to an overgenerous view of the overall quality of teaching in the academy.

The current academy development plan has appropriate priorities for improvement, but there are no measurable targets for pupils' attainment and progress. It is not clear who is responsible for ensuring that each action is taken or when the actions will be completed. This means that it is difficult for the governing body to monitor the academy's progress or judge its success in improving pupils' achievement.

Academy leaders gather a wealth of information on how well pupils in every year group are progressing, but do not analyse it effectively. They have not reviewed the impact of support programmes that aim to accelerate pupils' progress and tackle previous underachievement and do not know whether pupils are making up lost ground. Reports to the governing body are ambiguous and tend to accentuate the positive trends and gloss over less favourable data. This means that governors do not have an accurate view of pupils' achievement across the academy.

The Chair of the Governing Body now leads a new team of governors who have considerable experience and valuable expertise. This means that the governing body now has greater capacity to challenge and support academy leaders effectively. However, it is too early to see the impact of the new team.

External support

The predecessor school's partnership work with the academy trust got off to a slow start. The local authority stepped back from its role of monitoring the predecessor

school's progress during the autumn term and did not provide reports to the REAch2 Academy Trust. As a result, the academy's sponsor did not have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness when it took over in December 2012. The academy trust acted quickly to provide regular support for the inexperienced coordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SENCo). Following visits to the academy in February and a detailed review of the academy's effectiveness earlier this month, the academy trust has introduced a structured programme of monitoring and support.

Being part of the REAch2 Academy Trust provides opportunities to work with other academies that are part of the group and share expertise. Currently, the academy does not make enough use of this source of support.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the rigour of checks made on the quality of teaching, and ensure that judgements on the quality of teaching take account of pupils' progress over time.
- Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that all teachers whose practice is not consistently good have intensive support to improve.
- Review the academy's development plan and set out clear short-term and long-term targets for improvement with timescales and clear lines of accountability.
- Ensure that the governing body and academy's sponsor receive clear, unambiguous information about pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Director of the REAch2 Academy Trust and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles
Her Majesty's Inspector